

HUGH PRICE
--- HUGHES
PIONEER AND REFORMER



ARTHUR WALTERS

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A. Price Hughes.

HUGH PRICE HUGHES

PIONEER AND REFORMER

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR WALTERS

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

BY THE

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TO MY WIFE



PREFACE

HUGH PRICE HUGHES was only fifty-five years of age when he died ; yet few men have achieved more than he in so short a space of time. My difficulty in preparing this little book has been to condense into so small a compass any adequate account and commentary on the work of one who touched life at so many points. Much of necessity is left unwritten, but I have endeavoured to record the main features. Those who desire more will find it in the Life so brilliantly written by his daughter, Dorothea Price Hughes, to whose volume I acknowledge my indebtedness. I am also indebted to my brother, Mr. Ensor Walters, for contributing an introductory chapter dealing with the more intimate side of Mr. Hughes' life.

A. W.

September 1907.

There are three facts of which I am as deeply convinced as I am of my own existence; first, that Jesus Christ is my own personal Saviour; secondly, that He has called me to be a Methodist preacher; and thirdly, that my special work as a Methodist preacher was to be that of a pioneer and a reformer.

HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

(Presidential Address, Hull Conference, 1898.)

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HUGH PRICE HUGHES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here !
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad !
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the borderland dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succour'st !—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

MATTHEW ARNOLD,
'Rugby Chapel.'

HUGH PRICE HUGHES still lives. Nearly five years have passed since he was laid to rest in Highgate Cemetery, amidst the sorrow of multitudes. But he

was a man of that type which never dies. Pioneer and reformer, he inspired movements that live and are mightily effective to-day.

I count it as an unspeakable privilege that for seven years and three months I was associated with Mr. Hughes in the work of the West London Mission. Before that time he had been my ideal Christian minister. When at boarding-school I heard of his stirring evangelism and burning zeal, the desire was awakened within me to become a Methodist preacher, and when I knew him personally that desire was intensified. Many men in the Methodist ministry to-day can speak of a similar experience. Hugh Price Hughes was literally a boy's hero. His dash, his energy, his chivalry and his courage, appealed to boys. And there was some meaning in the gibe flung at his journal when it was christened the 'Boy's Own Paper.' A compliment in truth both to the *Methodist Times* and the excellent boys' paper which bears that title.

I shall never forget my first interview with him. I was seventeen years of age. There are some notable men who quickly make an ordinary person, especially a mere youth, feel himself a nobody. Not so Mr. Hughes. He inspired those who came in contact with him with self-respect. He talked to me on that occasion as if I had been a learned man, asked my opinion on many matters, and, what is more remarkable, listened to what I had to say. Amongst other things, he spoke of his own love for Christ and humanity in a manner which one could not forget. I went out of his presence not exactly with pride, but with a sense of life's sacred mission and a determination to spend my powers in Christ's service. Nor did his interest in me as a future minister of Christ cease then. When a student at Richmond College—his own college, where his influence is still powerful—he found time to write me letters concerning books and reading. I only mention these personal matters because they reveal the man, show a side of his character not

fully known, and demonstrate his practical interest in youth.

In this volume will be found details of his remarkable life. My object is to give a picture of the man—Hugh Price Hughes as he was seen from day to day. I write with a bias, for I loved him. He was my leader. Yet my impressions are written with no exaggeration. This is the greatest tribute to him—those who knew him best most fully believed in him.

My first and abiding impression of Mr. Hughes was that he was a *man of God*—an intensely devout and spiritually minded man. Religion was the passion of his life. In it he lived and moved and had his being. All interests were subservient to the interests of religion. And to him Christ was religion's central fact and supreme inspiration. F. W. H. Myers' description of St. Paul's faith fitted Mr. Hughes :

Christ! I am Christ's! and let that name suffice you;
Aye, for me too He greatly hath sufficed;
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you;
Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ.

His *passion for souls* was remarkable. The evangelical doctrine of conversion was an essential article of his faith. The work of the preacher was to lead men and women to conversion. I have seen him weep when there has been but little visible result to his ministry, and his delight was intense when under his teaching sinners sought salvation. He had won a verdict for Christ! Once when there was a dearth of conversions in our work—not that they had ceased, for Mr. Hughes never preached on a Sunday evening at St. James's Hall without some manifestation of God's power—he said to me: ‘Walters, will you seek to share with me the sufferings of Christ?’ Let it be noted however, that his evangelism was not emotionalism—it was literally the evangelism of the New Testament. Some evangelists move men and women merely to emotional surrender to God. Mr. Hughes led them to submit the will to Christ. And those converted through his ministry stood firm. They are to be found all over the world to-day. I rarely

visit any part of the country without hearing the testimony, 'I found Christ under the preaching of Hugh Price Hughes.'

He had a remarkable *belief in prayer*. When money was needed in the West London Mission he would call a prayer-meeting, and somehow or another the money came! He instituted late prayer-meetings. At the close of the day he would often call his workers for prayer between the hours of eleven o'clock and midnight. Some of the most gracious revivals in West London have resulted from these late prayer-meetings. In private prayer he talked to God as a child talks to his father. It was wonderful to hear him at family prayer. His language, free from convention and restraint, almost seemed to border on the irreverent, but in reality he was most devout. He lived too near God to be guilty of irreverence; '*believing prayer*' was an essential part of his religion.

Then above all his *faith was mighty*. His was a glorious optimism. He knew right would win, God would triumph. In

the most trying days of his life—and he had many trying days—his faith was undimmed. I remember walking with Mr Hughes at midnight through the streets of West London. We looked on the passers by ; on luxury and squalor, virtue and vice, wealth and poverty. . . . Ah ! how tragic West London is ! Gripping me by the arm he said : ‘ Believe me, even West London will become a city of God.’

But let it be noted that whilst Mr. Hughes was intensely devout, his religion was perfectly *natural*. He was not merely religious on the surface ; religion was his life. At the dinner-table—and he was most hospitable and always a delightful host—he would turn the conversation from politics to religion, or from matters of domestic interest to the deepest ‘ things of God.’ He loved a humorous story, but nothing questionable ever passed his lips. His words came quickly, but were constrained by the love of Christ. And he was always a great big human boy—if I may be excused the phrase. I well

remember his boyish delight in driving to visit the late Bishop of London, Dr. Creighton, in a carriage drawn by two fine horses lent him by a kindly lady friend. He was 'proud as Punch' that a Methodist minister could do the thing in style. Ever was he light-hearted, sunny in disposition. Shall I ever forget how he taught me to ride a bicycle ! How he roared over my blunders, running along at my side to keep me from falling ; telling me I was qualifying for a circus when I made some unfortunate blunder. Ah ! those happy Saturday cycle runs, with the ride back to town in the cool of the evening ; and Mr. Hughes would talk —and he *could* talk. He would speak of his love for his work and of the needs of West London. Ever full of schemes for advance and fresh triumphs, he would discuss projects of new activity. Then he would joke, full of high spirits ; and so the happy ride would pass. I care nothing for cycling now . . . he has gone !

That leads to the point that Mr. Hughes

was a *marvellous talker*. All knew his power in Conference, Synod, or public meeting, but to my mind he was most remarkable as a conversationalist—brilliant and witty, earnest and intense. And he could listen. This was most noticeable. He did not seem bored when he might well have been. He encouraged others to talk; so that with him silent men, to their astonishment, became almost eloquent. In the height of the controversy as to the justice of the South African War—his attitude on the war is well remembered—opponents of his view always had a patient hearing. He listened to me, a mere youth, for hours. And he answered, it is true with vehemence, but as a noble-spirited gentleman.

He was a *true gentleman*. Singularly fortunate in his ancestry and early influences, he had fine qualities of courtesy. This was particularly noticed by his colleagues and helpers. It endeared him to those who knew him best.

Mr. Hughes' *tireless industry* was extraordinary. He was always at work,

and even on a holiday his brain was never at rest. Think of his labours : Superintendent of a great Mission with a network of agencies ; largely responsible for its finance, and altogether for its policy. A Mission in no settled quarters, and situated in the hardest place in the Kingdom for evangelical propaganda. But his labours did not cease with his work in the Mission. Editor of a newspaper, he was keenly interested in politics and every subject under the sun. Interested in all the activities of Methodism, he was a member of innumerable committees. Leader of the Free Church movement, he accomplished a great work as one of the founders of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches. He did, in truth, the work of three or four busy men. I never saw him idling ; he would probably have been alive to-day if he had only learnt the gentle art of doing nothing. I have gone home with him after a long and busy day, seen him seize the evening paper and devour its contents, throwing out indignant or approving

remarks meanwhile. I have entered his study as he has been walking up and down dictating a fiery leader for the *Methodist Times*. Stopping a moment to hand me a newspaper, he has proceeded with his work, laying down the law for the readers of his paper. Then, when he has finished, he has plunged into conversation concerning the work of the Mission. I have, in obedience to his wishes, entered his bedroom on some errand regarding his work, and have found him asleep. He has immediately awakened, and almost before I left the room he has been asleep again. How he worked ! Was he in Switzerland, or the Holy Land, or Bournemouth ; his mind was in his work. The man could not rest.

This industry was not because he disliked holidays. Mr. Hughes delighted to travel ; especially to visit foreign lands. But even when his desire was gratified, he still worked. I visited him whilst he was supposed to be resting at Bournemouth. But most of his talk was the Mission and Methodism, Methodism and the Mission.

Little wonder he passed away at fifty-five. Perhaps his industry arose from his enthusiastic nature. He was a *born enthusiast*—enthusiastic about everything he touched—cycling, walking, reading, talking ; but above all the kingdom of God. His enthusiasm made everything ‘go.’ No prayer-meeting was dreary, no committee dull, and no service monotonous if he was present.

Hugh Price Hughes has passed to his reward. It is too early to estimate rightly the work he did for Methodism and the whole Church. But the aggressive spirit of Methodism and all Churches is a tribute to his memory. His was a noble life, and its reward on earth is abundantly apparent. How glorious his reward in the company of the Redeemed !

They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain :
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train !

CHAPTER II

ANCESTRY AND BOYHOOD

Every day of my life, since Hugh was born, I have prayed that he might do a good and great work, and be aided in the doing of it.

HUGH PRICE HUGHES' MOTHER.

THE ancestry of Hugh Price Hughes was his proud boast. Made up of strangely diversified elements, it contributed in no small degree to the many-sidedness of his character. Welsh on his father's side, and Jewish on his mother's, he inherited all the best in the traits of these two great nationalities. The eloquence and poetic insight of the Celt, the tenacity, persistence, and keen penetration of the Jew, combined to make a personality at once striking and original.

His grandfather, Hugh Hughes, was an honoured Wesleyan minister in the Principality, and the first Welshman ever

elected to the Legal Hundred. For fourteen years he presided over the South Wales District Synod, and no Chairman was ever more welcome in his visitations to the various circuits. In those days such visitations occupied about six months of the year, and for the most part were done on horseback. This faithful Welsh preacher was a great lover of horses, and the country folk credited him with control over the most unmanageable.

The futility of attempting to crush a Hughes was illustrated the first time Hugh Hughes went to Conference. In those days Dr. Bunting was all-powerful, and only the very brave dared venture an opinion in his presence. Hugh Hughes rose to address the assembly on the question of the difference in treatment of the Welsh preachers as compared with the English. This was not to the liking of Dr. Bunting, who in a sentence thought to crush the speaker. But Hugh Hughes was not so easily to be silenced. He appealed to the courtesy due to a young and inexperienced speaker, and

more especially one who came from a distant province. Dr. Bunting rose and frankly apologized, and from that day he and Hugh Hughes became attached friends.

Hugh Hughes also held the position of Book Steward for Wales, controlling all Connexional literature. He was a great evangelist, and many sought and found Christ under his impassioned preaching. In 1843, after a strenuous and devoted ministerial life, he sought retirement at Carmarthen. Here his son John, the father of Hugh Price, had begun to practise as a surgeon, and here in the year 1847 Hugh Price was born.

Dr. John Hughes was a man of no ordinary calibre. Educated at Kingswood School, he afterwards entered St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and eventually became a member of the College of Surgeons, and of the Society of Apothecaries. Besides being a skilled practitioner he greatly distinguished himself in public service at Carmarthen. An able and fluent speaker, possessed of marked administrative ability,

a man of deep piety and high principle, he stood high in esteem among his fellows ; almost every office which merit and public authority could confer were his. Strange to say, he never heard his son preach. He passed away in his eightieth year, a great lover of Christ and Methodism. Two lines are engraved on the cross which marks his burial-place :

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

The Jewish ancestry Mr. Hughes derived from his mother. ‘Lithe and graceful’ she was ; a brilliant conversationalist, clever and distinguished—yet withal a mother, loving her children as only a mother can. Her grandfather had been a wealthy Jew at Haverfordwest, and on becoming a Christian had changed his name from Levi to Phillips.

As a child Hugh Price was very delicate, and his parents feared whether he would ever grow into manhood. After a brief time spent at an elementary school, he was sent to a boarding-school at Swansea. This was kept by Mr. J. R. D.

Colston, a Methodist local preacher, who, with Mrs. Colston, his wife, took a most kindly interest in their delicate pupil. The religious sense early showed itself in the child's nature; he would pray about everything. On one occasion when his sister was ill, her little brother was discovered praying in the garden for her recovery. In matters of learning the boy was not excessively precocious, and no rapid intellectual development was shown until his twelfth year. But vivacity, activity, audacity, argumentativeness, and capacity for leadership—characteristics which were so marked in later life—early revealed themselves. Later the school was removed to The Mumbles, a charming and romantic spot on Swansea Bay. The little chapel situated on the cliff there was destined to become the scene of a momentous and far-reaching event in the young schoolboy's life.

It is impossible to enumerate all the influences which go towards bringing about a change in the soul's experience. Doubtless there were many in the case of

Hugh Price Hughes. There was the influence of home, with the mother's constant prayer that her son might live to do 'a good and great work.' None can tell all the part that played. Many are the avenues leading up to God, and the means by which a crisis is brought about in the soul's experience. For Hugh it came on this wise. In God's good Providence there sailed one morning into Mumbles Bay a boat of Cornish fishermen, who, like the good Christians they were, wended their way to the little Wesleyan chapel to join in praising and blessing God. In the congregation were Mr. Colston and his pupils, with young Hugh amongst them. These men must have been filled with the true spirit, for they prayed and sung with unwonted power. The young schoolboy was greatly impressed; for such earnestness and intensity he had never before witnessed. It was evident that these Cornish fishermen possessed something that was not his, and it was this that first set the lad thinking. He would say in after years that the

conviction of sin came about through general influences, but it was the visit of these Cornish fishermen that brought matters to a crisis. This crisis was but the beginning of things. Roused to a sense of sin, the boy's first experience was one of trouble and anguish. 'How may I find a gracious God?' he might have cried with Luther; but God was not far removed from him, and he was soon to know how really near He was in Jesus Christ.

Two further memorable events followed the visit of these Cornish fishermen. Hugh's state of mind had become known to his elders—godly men, as anxious about the boy's soul as the lad himself. A conversation which the young pupil had with one of the masters in the school, Mr. Leaker, a brother-in-law of Mr. Colston, led to a declaration of submission to Christ. Still, there was something lacking, and his mind was uneasy; but in God's good time the full light was to dawn, and the boy to know in all its entirety the joy of the forgiven soul.

A minister from America was on a visit to some friends in the neighbourhood, and he took the services in the little Methodist chapel. ‘I was sitting one night,’ says Mr. Hughes in one of his sermons, ‘in a little chapel in Wales. I had been burdened some time with a deep and deepening sense of sin, of my absolute inability to save myself, and of my utter need of God, when I suddenly realized that the whole of the difficulty was in ME, that there was no difficulty in God. I submitted there and then, sitting in the midst of a row of schoolboys. I submitted, and in a moment I realized the love of God. A great light sprang up in my dark heart.’ This was a characteristic way of setting forth the relationship of God towards man. Speaking of it on another occasion, he said, ‘My heart danced within me, and I scarce knew how to contain myself as I sat shoulder to shoulder with my fellows.’

This joyous experience never left Mr. Hughes from that day until the last. Speaking of it twenty-five years after, he

said, ‘I realize now more clearly than in my boyhood the greatness and intensity of the love of God.’ True, there were periods of darkness and depression, as there are for every saint of God ; but never once did he lose the consciousness that he was the son of God, nor a sense of all that privilege meant.

The boy’s new experience showed itself in many ways. There was a marked change in his attitude towards his school-fellows, and an eager desire to do Christ service. That he could keep such an experience to himself was not likely. It was ever a characteristic that, having made a discovery, all the world must know it. Could he keep to himself the greatest discovery, the discovery of Christ ? His zeal expressed itself in the holding of prayer-meetings among his schoolfellows. One night he was discovered holding one in his dormitory at an hour when all the boys were supposed to be asleep ! This new-born joy also found expression in tract distribution, and later in conducting cottage services. It

was in a little cottage, where he had hired a room, that his first sermon was preached from the text, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ On that occasion, it is said, the youthful preacher had a congregation of four, one of whom was an old salt with a wooden leg !

Other sermons followed, delivered on more important occasions, and opinions concerning the youthful preacher’s ability were unanimous. It was said of him, as it has been said of many a promising young preacher, that he would some day become President of the Conference, the difference being, that whereas the prophecy is seldom fulfilled, in the case of Hugh Price Hughes it was. His mother’s prayer was to be answered, and her son destined to do ‘a good and great work, and be aided in the doing of it.’

CHAPTER III

LOCAL PREACHER AND THEOLOGICAL STUDENT

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it.

CARLYLE.

METHODISM knows no regulation as to the age when one can become a recognized preacher. The needful thing is the ‘gift of tongues,’ and that the gift should be of God. Thus there is nothing surprising that the early age of fourteen found Hugh Price Hughes ‘on trial’ as a local preacher in the Swansea Circuit. All desirous of entering the ordained ministry must first serve an apprenticeship among the local preachers; they then become eligible to present themselves as candidates for the ministry. That the young schoolboy believed God had called him to the

work is shown by the now famous correspondence :

Hugh to his Father.

MY DEAR FATHER,

I believe it is the will of God that I should be a Methodist preacher.

Your affectionate son,

HUGH.

The Father to Hugh.

MY DEAR BOY,

I would rather you be a Methodist preacher than the Lord Chancellor of England.

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN HUGHES.

The same year, Hugh, having gained the position of head boy, left the school at The Mumbles and went to reside with his father at Carmarthen. Here he continued his studies, showing an almost ferocious appetite for reading ; we are told that he ventured into ‘deep waters,’ studying *Butler’s Analogy*, *Pearson on the Creed*, and *Watson’s Institutes*.

The chapel-keeper at the Welsh Wesleyan chapel at Carmarthen has supplied Mr. Hughes' daughter with an interesting incident of these early years of training.¹ The boy preacher was constantly coming and worrying her for the keys of the building. One day she and the doctor, wondering what the boy was about, went and looked through one of the windows, and found the young preacher rehearsing a sermon to an imaginary congregation ! It appears that he was to preach in his native town to a congregation not uncritical of his gifts ; and, characteristically, was most anxious to be at his best on such an important occasion. He preached then from a text which all through life he lived, ' I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.'

In due course Mr. Hughes became fully accredited as a local preacher, and in the year 1865 presented himself as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry. He passed all the various tests with distinction, being especially commended for his trial sermons.

¹ *Life, by his Daughter, page 30.*

One hundred and forty-six candidates sought entry into the ministry that year, and Mr. Hughes, who was the youngest save one, ranked second in the final examination results. ‘He had all the appearance and manner of a mere boy, playful as a kitten and overflowing with animal spirits,’ says one of his fellow candidates; ‘we recognized then that he was a man of no ordinary gifts and attainments.’ He was sent to the Theological Institution at Richmond. His portrait, with the men of his year, now hangs in one of the ‘common-rooms’ of the College. He had greatly improved in health and was no longer frail and delicate-looking. His study, situated in the ‘Lower Chequer,’ is reverently pointed out to all visitors to the famous college.

Such a personality was not long in making an impression. The Rev. Robert Culley, contemporary with Mr. Hughes at Richmond, says,¹ ‘His fellow students regarded him as a most interesting personality, certainly the most remarkable

¹ *Methodist Times*, November 20, 1902.

personality in the College. His quite boyish appearance, his intense vitality, his resourcefulness, gave him an influence that dominated almost everything (not everything) in the College.' He is described at this period as being 'a tall, slender youth, with very blue eyes.' He displayed remarkable conversational powers, and ability to talk on any subject ; nonsense he was an adept at—but only such nonsense as a clever man could talk. He conducted a Bible-class for the children of the Governor and Tutors, and interested them as none had ever done before. He was keen on cricket, and captain of the college team. He took the liveliest interest in all public questions agitating the mind of the country at the time ; and, strange to relate, viewed them from a conservative standpoint.

In those days the Governor of the College was the Rev. Alfred Barrett. The Revs. John Lomas and Benjamin Hellier were respectively Theological and Classical Tutors, while the Assistant Tutor was Dr. William Fiddian Moulton. This was an

exceptionally strong staff, and could not fail to make its influence felt on the earnest young student. Mr. Hughes showed the same keenness about his studies as about everything he undertook, and was most impatient of anything that stood in their way. He felt at that time, and expressed it constantly in after life, that the students were sent to the colleges to *study*; he had strong convictions of the necessity for a cultured and educated ministry. Methodists will know that it is customary for the students at the various colleges to raise each year a considerable sum of money at their Foreign Missionary Anniversary; more especially is this the case at Richmond, and the men write many letters to their friends in their efforts to exceed the previous year's sum. The writer remembers a student appealing to Mr. Hughes, and he in reply saying that he thought it would be better if the students kept to their studies instead of spending their time writing begging-letters. This, needless to say, was not written in any unkindly spirit or with any

lack of sympathy toward the missionary cause, but it is illustrative of the view he held of college days, and the preciousness of the time spent there. So marked was his own enthusiasm for study that the usual limit of three years' training was in his case extended to four.

The scholarly and saintly Dr. William F. Moulton played a considerable part in the development of Mr. Hughes' intellectual life at Richmond, and it was largely owing to his encouragement that Mr. Hughes graduated at the London University. Dr. James Hope Moulton, in his father's Life,¹ tells us that 'with Mr. Hughes in his Richmond days and ever since Dr. Moulton's relations were very close, and more than once the mediation of the Assistant Tutor saved the student from the wrath of the more conservative authorities.'

This last statement has reference to the several occasions on which the student came in conflict with the college authorities. When Mr. Hughes' after-life and

¹ *Dr. W. F. Moulton, Life*, by his Son, p. 56.

work are remembered, such collision is not wondered at. Men of deep conviction and independence of thought are bound sooner or later to come into collision with somebody or something ; and these were but the beginning of many conflicts in which Mr. Hughes felt in duty bound to engage.

The first was in reference to the question of nationalizing the Universities —the Bill was then before Parliament. Mr. Hughes, at the instance of the Liberation Society, forwarded a petition purporting to come from ‘Tutors and students of the College.’ As a matter of fact two tutors only had signed. This roused the wrath of Mr. Lomas, and in vain it was pointed out that the petition was not described as coming from *the* tutors but ‘tutors.’ The matter was brought up in the Institution Committee, but Dr. Moulton stood by Mr. Hughes, and nothing further came of it.

The second was perhaps more serious, because it resulted in an attempt to ‘put back’ Mr. Hughes for two years. As

Chairman of the Students' Missionary meeting, he had ventured to maintain that the Conference had made a great mistake in deciding that Richmond should be an exclusive Missionary College. The matter was brought up in the May District Synod ; and Dr. Osborn, who was in the chair, urged that Mr. Hughes should be punished by adding two years to his probation for daring to question the wisdom of the decision of Conference. Dr. W. F. Moulton moved an amendment that no step should be taken, and this was carried by a large majority.

It will be noted by these incidents that Mr. Hughes' college days were not altogether uneventful ; but an event of a very different description was to happen and play a considerable part in the student's after life.

It was at Richmond College that Mr. Hughes first met his future wife, Mary Katherine Barrett, a daughter of the College Governor. The girl used to pay weekly visits to Mr. Hughes' study, collecting pennies for the Missionary

Society; and the young student would engage in all sorts of playful tricks on these happy occasions, for he was ever full of fun.

They were married during Mr. Hughes' ministerial term at Brighton. Shortly before the wedding, writing to an old school friend, he said, 'To-morrow month, after waiting six years ! Can you understand my emotions ? I hope God may make me a good husband—I am quite convinced that nothing but His blessing can make my marriage truly happy.' God's blessing did indeed rest upon their union, and the marriage was a singularly happy one. Some one has said, 'Had Mr. Hughes been a celibate friar he would have made a very unlovely person indeed.' Enough cannot be written of the part Mrs. Hughes played in her husband's career—none but he or she could tell the story in all its entirety. But the most casual friend knew that there existed between them a perfect union and sympathy, and in all the noble work Mr. Hughes did they were one.

In what direction was the mind of Hugh Price Hughes working in these formative days? A contrast of the student with the circuit minister and missioner is an interesting study, and illustrates Mr. Hughes' intense desire to obey God's will and render Christ greatest service. 'A passion for souls, an eager desire for the conversion of men and women,' has been described as the most prominent feature of his life. And so it was; but such could scarcely be said of him during his college days; his passion then took the shape of a desire to face the intellectual difficulties of the time. And this characterized his preaching. The men at College, then as now, seemed naturally to divide into 'sets,' and Mr. Hughes stood among the men of his day who regarded with little favour what was then termed 'revivalism.'

Those who remember Hugh Price Hughes as an ardent temperance reformer, and a dread enemy of the 'trade,' could scarce imagine him advocating—as captain of the College cricket team—the

provision of a barrel of beer on the field for the purpose of refreshing the student players, or pouring ridicule on a Temperance Society formed among the men ! Yet such was the case. Later chapters will reveal the change that came over him in these matters.

CHAPTER IV

CIRCUIT MINISTER

Be earnest, earnest, earnest ; mad if thou wilt ;
Do what thou dost as if the stake were heaven,
And that thy last deed ere the judgement day.
When all's done, nothing's done.

There's rest above :
Below let work be death, if work be love.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

THE first six years of Mr. Hughes' ministerial life were spent by the sea at Dover and Brighton. He had left Richmond in June 1869, and began his ministry at Dover in the following September. He had been viewing the battle from afar, but now was to enter into the thick of the fray. Studiously and enthusiastically he had been preparing his weapons, theorizing and idealizing what he thought to be his life's work.

We have noted the trend of the student's mind at Richmond, and wondered at his

seeming contempt for 'revivalism,' and his cynical attitude towards teetotalism. Was this the Hugh Price Hughes who, in after years, became one of the most conspicuous leaders of evangelical thought among the Churches and a pioneer of the forward policy of Temperance ?

He went to Dover full of holy ambition for Christ, eager to do Him conspicuous service ; but it was not to be accomplished in exactly the way he had dreamed. God breaks off man's purpose that a higher purpose may be fulfilled, and very early in his career Mr. Hughes was to see that God had other plans as to his life's work. This indication was unmistakable, and showed itself the first Sunday of Mr. Hughes' ministry. 'What think ye of Christ?' was the text preached from on that occasion, and as young and old listened to the earnest pleading of the 'pale, spectacled young preacher,' they were led to think of Christ as never before. That night eighteen sought and found Christ as their Saviour. It would seem that Mr. Hughes was just as surprised at

this as everybody else. Truly the ways of God were past finding out, and from that day he never ceased to believe God had specially called him to be a means of leading back sinners to Himself. Surely such was a direct indication of God's purpose concerning Mr. Hughes' life-work, and he obeyed it to the utmost. The servant was not 'disobedient to the heavenly vision.'

A like radical change came over him in regard to the Temperance question. At college he had poured ridicule on the 'Insane Society,' but brought face to face as he was at Dover with the demon of strong drink, he soon began to view the question from a different standpoint. From his study window in a house adjoining Buckland Chapel could be seen three public-houses. This eager young preacher was not slow in discerning that drink formed one of the most effective barriers to his work, and with whole heart he threw himself into the fray. All through life he possessed a remarkable power of adapting himself and his labours

to the immediate need of the moment. A Band of Hope was formed, and the junior minister was himself among the first to sign the pledge. He seized every opportunity of writing and speaking against the liquor traffic. At the invitation of the Young Men's Christian Association he delivered a Temperance lecture, with the striking title, *The Black Bottle Delusion*—‘delusion’ was a favourite word with him. The lecture created a considerable stir in the town, and the publicans were not a little angry. Here was an opponent to be reckoned with, as the following illustration will show. It is related by one of the Dover Methodists who cannot speak with enough thankfulness of the effect the lecture produced on him and his wife. Temperance in those days was something of a novelty ; and, more out of curiosity than anything else, they decided to go and hear what their minister had to say on the question. After closing the shop, for they were then in business, they drank a pint of beer together, laughingly remarking that it

might be their last—and it was. ‘From that day to this,’ he says, ‘my wife and I have never touched a glass of beer.’ An illustration, truly, of Mr. Hughes’ power to convince, for it must be remembered the public mind was not so educated on these matters then as now.

From Dover days until the end he waged unceasing warfare against the liquor traffic, and few men have done more to rouse the Church to a sense of its duty on this great question. ‘If there is one subject more than another,’ he says, ‘upon which the followers of Jesus Christ are bound to speak out, it is the liquor trade. It is the greatest of all existing hindrances to the progress of the gospel in England.’ He could not understand why the wealthy total abstainers of Methodism were not more ready to give pecuniary support to the Connexional organization; the Temperance Committee ought to be more amply furnished with the ‘sinews of war.’ He advocated a more liberal circulation of temperance literature, the appointment of scientific

lecturers to our schools and colleges, the appointing of police-court and other missionaries, the establishment of a temperance information bureau ; and he expressed the hope that some day there would be formed a Connexional Temperance Sick Benefit Society. It is interesting to note that these are some of the questions now engaging the attention of the Wesleyan Methodist Temperance Committee. When he began his great mission in West London, a foremost item in the programme was continuous warfare against strong drink.

Hugh Price Hughes was perfectly rational in his attitude towards the Temperance question, and never sided with the extreme party. When an attempt was made to debar from office in Methodism all who had any share in the sale of intoxicating liquors, the proposal found little sympathy with him. He thought the time was not yet ripe for such a measure, though it is bound to come sooner or later, through the ripening conviction of the Church.

In all public questions agitating the minds of the Dover townspeople Mr. Hughes was to the front. He held that a minister should interest himself and as far as possible enter into every part of the life of the town in which he lived. He took a deep interest in the Young Men's Christian Association, and advocated the organization of its work on a broader and more generous basis. On the motion of some narrow-minded but well-meaning members of the Association that *Punch* should be excluded from its reading-room on the ground that it was a publication 'contemptuous of religious influences,' Mr. Hughes joined in a protest, and at a special meeting called to reconsider the question, carried the day for *Punch* in a clever and humorous speech. For this, *Punch* presented him with 'his royal thanks,' an honour unique among Wesleyan ministers. Another amusing controversy was with an Anglican curate of the town, who had told a woman she would go to hell if she attended Mr. Hughes' services, and in a letter had

refused to address Mr. Hughes as *Reverend*. This good brother came in for no small share of Mr. Hughes' satire.

In all the good work Mr. Hughes did at Dover it is needless to say he found many helpers. Two names are especially worthy of mention : Mr. Alderman Rees, who was not only a prominent Methodist, but one who took the liveliest interest in the political and civil life of the town ; and Mr. George Flashman, a man of deep spirituality and charm. Mr. Flashman did much to influence Mr. Hughes in the spiritual and evangelistic work of the church.

Old Dover Methodists retain many loving and precious memories of Mr. Hughes' ministry among them. 'He had a kind and cheery word for all,' says one, 'and would never pass us by without the most intimate recognition. I was a young fellow at the time engaged in the bakery business. 'How are you, Mr. — ?' he would shout across the road, as I was going my round ; 'you deliver the bread for this life, and I deliver it for the life

to come.' Another says, 'He used to tell us he was near-sighted, but he never failed to see and recognize us in the street, and had always a kindly word.'

Thus passed the first three years of Mr. Hughes' public ministry. They have been noted at some length, because to a very large degree they marked out his after career. It was not merely that he left his impress on Dover, as truly he did, but Dover left its impress on him. God had revealed His will, and His servant had not been slow to obey. His departure was felt by many beside the Methodists. Members of other churches, and even those who belonged to no church, had been quick to recognize his unique gifts, and many were present to listen to his farewell sermons preached at Buckland Chapel.

Brighton was the next scene of Mr. Hughes' labours. Every watering-place has its characteristics, and between Dover and Brighton there were subtle differences. The whole atmosphere of the place was different, and Mr. Hughes

felt it. This may, perhaps, partly account for the fact that there were not the same immediate results from his work as at Dover.

At Brighton he again threw himself whole-heartedly into Temperance work, and delivered his famous Temperance lecture at the Dome. He also started a Band of Hope in connexion with the chapel of which he had special charge. Temperance reform was not a popular programme at Brighton in those days, and Mr. Hughes' work was not done without opposition. But nothing could daunt this man when once possessed of a conviction, and that the temperance question had now become.

He took a prominent part in the School Board election agitating the mind of the town, and successfully fought for the return of the Protestant and Progressive candidates. All through life he felt the deepest interest in the education question, and fought hard for the 'religious and unsectarian policy.'

Brighton, like Dover, was to leave its

impress on Mr. Hughes, but not in the same manner. A few months before he left the town, a series of holiness meetings were held under the presidency of Mr. and Mrs. Pearsall Smith. These Mr. Hughes attended, and was deeply moved by the addresses. They seemed to tell of an experience that was not yet wholly his—a sense of more absolute surrender, and fuller development of the spiritual part of his nature. Into that blessed experience Mr. Hughes entered there and then, re-consecrating himself afresh to God and the cause for which Christ gave His life.

After Brighton, London. Yet not London's heart, but near enough to feel its throb. Tottenham, where Mr. Hughes resided, has considerably changed since those days, and is now one of London's thickly-populated suburbs. That change he anticipated by early urging upon the Tottenham Methodists the need of providing for the invasion which he felt was bound to come. To tell the story of his work here would be largely a repetition.

Suffice it to say, it was marked by the same earnestness and intensity that had characterized his Dover and Brighton ministry.

From Tottenham Mr. Hughes removed to Dulwich, having special charge of the handsome Methodist chapel in Barry Road. Here he was successful in introducing the liturgical service, which all through life he loved; so much so, that some complained of what they thought to be his 'Church tendencies.' He strongly insisted upon reverence, order, and good music in the sanctuary, believing that there were a number of young Methodists who could only be kept to the Church of their fathers by attention to these things. The mission services he afterwards conducted in Piccadilly, although held in a hall devoted for the most part to things secular, were always characterized by reverence and order. St. James's Hall on Sundays was a veritable 'house of God.'

At Barry Road, as in former circuits, Mr. Hughes stood for aggression; he must always be moving. Bourienne says that Napoleon believed if he remained

stationary he would fall ; he was tormented with the desire to be always moving. This could be said with equal truth of Hugh Price Hughes. But others must move as well as he. A commonplace condition of success for men in everything is not merely the capacity to work themselves but to induce others to work. Mr. Hughes possessed this invaluable gift to a marked degree. To be told was to obey ; there was no escape. This man was a born leader. His energy and enthusiasm were contagious, and men were led almost against their will to do his bidding. One of the most prominent workers at the West London Mission says : ' He possessed a marvellous magnetic influence, an electric force which filled every one who was brought into touch with him '¹ ; and another, ' He had an extraordinary power of extracting out of people the utmost exertion of which they were capable.' All this was strikingly illustrated in two Missions Mr. Hughes organized and con-

¹ *Hugh Price Hughes as we knew him*, p. 64.

ducted during his Barry Road ministry. Among those who helped were many who had never before engaged in such work, and who would have been thought the last in the church to do so. These gladly gave their aid in a thorough canvass of the neighbourhood, inviting attendance at the services. The result exceeded the most sanguine expectation, and night by night the chapel was filled and sinners converted to God.

Illustrative of Mr. Hughes' untiring industry is the fact that he found time during all this stress of special work to read for and obtain his Master of Arts degree at the London University. This was done unknown both to his superintendent and congregation. He set himself also to learn German, that he might read German philosophy in the original. This showed the manysidedness of his character. Arduous in his 'Father's business,' he did not neglect the cultivation of his mind. An earnest evangelist, an earnest student—a none too frequent combination.

From London Mr. Hughes removed

to Oxford. That Oxford should possess special attractions for this eager student and cultured young Methodist preacher is not to be wondered at. In many ways it was a remarkable appointment. The age was not so much an age of youth as now. To-day, when Methodism does not fear to place its young men in positions of authority and responsibility, the appointment may not appear noteworthy. Mr. Hughes had only travelled twelve years when he became superintendent of the Oxford circuit.

Methodism had not flourished in the university town, but with the advent of Hugh Price Hughes richer and fuller days were in store, and Oxford, so closely allied to Methodism's earliest beginnings, was to see the dawn of better things. 'In accepting the invitation,' wrote Mr. Hughes in his story of the revival of Oxford Methodism, 'I did not receive much encouragement except from my immediate predecessor, Mr. Floyd. An honoured minister who had preceded him came to me in the Conference to condole

with me. He thought I was "beating my head uselessly against a wall," and was about to throw away three of the most important years of my life. In his judgment the case of Methodism in Oxford was hopeless.' But to Mr. Hughes, Methodism was nowhere hopeless, and especially did this prove the case at Oxford.

Between the Methodist minister and the Methodist undergraduates there immediately existed the closest sympathy. He seemed to enter into their life as no other servant of Christ had done, and not a few think of fresh ideals and new visions brought about by association with him.

At Oxford, as in London, Mr. Hughes conducted special missions. These missions marked an epoch in Oxford Methodism. All sorts and conditions flocked to the services ; the whole thing was unprecedented. So far-reaching were the results, and subsequent work done by Mr. Hughes, that ultimately three new chapels were erected in Oxford, besides several in villages near by ; for Mr. Hughes

knew that when God touches a man's heart He touches his pocket. It was commonly believed that Oxford Methodism was particularly poverty-stricken, but Mr. Hughes declared he had never found it so easy to raise money. Here is the simple solution to all financial difficulties in the church—get the people converted, and the money will come.

The *Methodist Recorder* of March 3, 1882, contained a lengthy communication from the Rev. William Arthur. Mr. Arthur had visited Oxford, and in that letter gave some account of this remarkable revival. One brief extract will suffice to show its thoroughness. 'From the time of the appointment of Mr. Hughes at the last Conference, there has been a continuous accession of new members, and on Covenant Sunday at the opening of the year he had the joy of meeting at the Lord's table more than two hundred young persons under twenty years of age.' This blessed work was not merely confined to Oxford, but spread in a like degree to the surrounding villages.

Well might Mr. Hughes write, in reviewing his Oxford ministry : 'It was one of the most happy and prosperous periods of my ministerial life ; and this is the moral of it all : *Nowhere is Methodism too feeble or too poor to achieve mighty results in the name of God.*' Truly mighty results were achieved in the name of God at Oxford.

In 1884 Hugh Price Hughes returned to London, and was stationed in the Brixton Hill circuit. The wisdom of the Oxford appointment had been more than justified. The Brixton Hill ministry was marked by those characteristics which had elsewhere distinguished his work. He inaugurated and successfully completed an aggressive scheme involving an outlay of £5,000. Here also he conducted missions with the like success that had attended his previous evangelical work.

Other important events connected with the Brixton Hill ministry will be treated in a later chapter.

CHAPTER V

MISSIONER—WEST LONDON

I have seen the greatest wonder which the world can show to the astonished spirit. I have seen it, and am more astonished than ever—and still there remains fixed in my memory that stone forest of houses, and amid them the rushing stream of faces, of living human faces, with all their motley passions, all their terrible impulses of love, of hunger, and of hate. . . . I am speaking of London.

HEINE.

'LIFE is made possible and endurable,' Mr. Hughes once said, 'by the fact that so much of the misery of others is mercifully concealed from us; we all sit more or less blindfold at the banquet of life.' This is profoundly true. In 1885 there was published that memorable pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. That terrible revelation of London's religious and moral condition aroused unusual interest. People had been wofully ignorant of these 'matters; they had

never troubled to inquire. ‘While we have been building our churches,’ wrote the author,¹ ‘and solacing ourselves with our religion, and dreaming that the millennium was coming, the poor have been growing poorer, the wretched more miserable, and the immoral more corrupt ; the gulf has been daily widening which separates the lowest classes of the community from our churches and chapels and from all decency and civilization. We are simply living in a fools’ paradise if we suppose that all the agencies now in operation, when combined, are doing a thousandth part of what needs to be done, a hundredth part of what could be done by the Church of Christ. We must face the facts, and these compel the conviction that this terrible flood of sin and misery is gaining upon us every day.’

This was a serious indictment of the work of the Churches, and the more so because of its painful truth. Let it be recorded to the honour of the Congre-

¹ The Rev. Andrew Mearns, Congregational minister.

gationalists that their ‘Union’ had opened a number of mission halls in low and degraded metropolitan districts, and were doing what they could for their neglected brothers and sisters. But it was a cry to which all the Churches needed to respond if anything was to be done.

These, then, were the earliest days of the ‘Forward Movement,’ an expressive title given to the new spirit which was to animate the Churches.

Methodism was not deaf to the ‘Bitter Cry,’ and none heard it more distinctly than Hugh Price Hughes. He, with a few other devoted men who had the true interests of their Church and the people at heart, saw that if Methodism was to continue as a living Church, fulfilling a real mission, something must be done. Significant of this, were the titles of some of the editor’s leading articles in the *Methodist Times* of that period. ‘Methodists, wake up !’ ‘Is Methodism to be a dying sect or a living Church ?’ No Church can live on its past. The early history of Methodism had been magnifi-

cent—a second Acts of the Apostles. But it was gradually ceasing to touch life. Dr. Clifford, speaking at the time of Mr. Hughes' death, told of his knowledge of early Methodism ; he knew it in the forties, when it was ‘rigid, frigid, enthroning the traditions of the past, bound up in red tape, and unable to look out and see what was going on in the world. It was then an institutional Church that had lost its mission, and was nothing more than an iron-bound clericalism.’

It was given to Hugh Price Hughes, not so much to create a new Methodism, as some have imagined, but to revive the old. Some feared he was drifting away from the ‘old paths’ ; but there never lived a truer follower of John Wesley, nor one who had a more intense love for the Methodist Church. Again and again he would speak of himself as an ‘old-fashioned Methodist,’ and ignorant people who did not know the history of their own Church would smile at what they thought to be the speaker’s witty sarcasm. But this in many respects is just what he

was. Men have spoken of him as the greatest gift to his Church since John Wesley. It was certainly his to call the Methodist Church, as none other man had done, to those early passions and enthusiasms which so characterized Wesley's work. He revived the passion for Christ, and in so doing revived the passion for men's souls. Writing of *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, he said, 'We realized that we were partly responsible for the existing sin and misery of London, and that we must do our share in the great work which demands the united devotion of all the Churches.'

In 1884 the Conference appointed a special committee to consider the spiritual needs of London. Of this was born that great movement now known as the London Wesleyan Mission. The first proposal was more especially to evangelize Central London. The Mission has since grown to remarkable dimensions, and branches have been established in nearly all London's needy centres.

The inauguration fittingly took place

in Wesley's historic sanctuary in 1885. It was to be a new organization ; but this point was insisted upon—it was to be essentially *Methodist*. At this meeting Mr. Hughes expressed the conviction that Methodism's immediate need was a revolution. And so the movement has proved, not only for London, but throughout the country, and not only for Methodism, but for other Churches. It would be impossible to tabulate all the direct and indirect results of the operations of the London Mission.

The outcome of a meeting of the sub-committee which met to nominate ministers for the work was an invitation to Hugh Price Hughes to take charge of the Mission in East London ; but as the committee was not prepared to begin the work on the scale Mr. Hughes thought would alone command success, he did not see his way to accept. If anything was to be done, it must be carried out with bold enterprise and daring faith. 'Evangelistic work,' he said, 'must be undertaken on a scale and with a thorough-

ness of which at present we have no example.' There were certain essentials he insisted upon for the success of the Forward Movement : a suitable mission centre, social work, a free hand, and the abolition of the ministerial three years' limit.

The Conference of that year (1885) was made memorable by the discussions which took place relative to the proposed new movement. The Rev. Peter Thompson was appointed to the East End, and the Rev. Edward Smith to Central London. It is interesting to note that in the same year the foundation stones of the Central Hall in Manchester were laid. The following year the London Mission Committee unanimously decided to establish a branch of the Mission in West London, and Hugh Price Hughes was invited to take charge. Consent was given, subject, of course, to the approval of the Conference, on condition that the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse acted as his colleague. In a memorable letter Mr. Hughes addressed to Mr. Pearse, he said : 'At a meeting of the London

Mission Committee I was asked to undertake a mission in the West End of London.

. . . This is a new idea, but it is strongly urged on me, and it has so much in its favour that I'm already disposed to say "Yes" to the proposal, on one condition—that you consent to be associated with me in this enterprise. . . . Besides the upper classes there are thousands of young men and young women in the West End shops. In different ways you and I are better fitted for this work than any two of our contemporaries. . . . You would edify the saints and I would pursue the sinners. . . . I pray Christ with all my heart that in this crisis in your life and mine we may know and do the will of God.' The will of God was done, and Mark Guy Pearse became Hugh Price Hughes' first colleague in West London.

The Conference at which the appointments were confirmed was again made memorable by a further debate on the new Movement. It was realized that another critical period in Methodism's history had begun. 'Could Methodism

do what she did in the beginning? Could she save the lost? There was a tide in the affairs of men ; were they going to take that tide at its flood ?' So spake one of the most distinguished members of the Conference, and not in vain.

Undoubtedly Hugh Price Hughes came to his own when he took up residence in West London, and, under God, founded his great Mission. That Mission will always remain his truest monument. From the first West London fascinated and attracted him ; for its life he lived and died. None who heard his passionate pleading for West London's need could doubt how much its sin and misery was laid upon his heart. People sometimes thought those black pictures were unreal, but they had never known West London as Mr. Hughes had known it. And there are others who bear testimony. Mr. Arthur Sherwell, M.P., in *Life in West London*, writes : 'The district as a whole is characterized by conditions which, if they do not defy, at least baffle, accurate description.' Christian work in such a

district as this was not easy, and this fact makes the phenomenal success of the Mission the more remarkable.

More than West London's social conditions, terrible though they are, it was West London's sin, its 'moral leprosy,' that was laid on Mr. Hughes' heart. Here was that league of sin—intemperance, impurity, gambling—with all the attendant evils that follow in its train. The Missioner met with many disappointments and disillusionments, for no great reformer has ever been spared the pain of these. But with an optimism born of a limitless faith in Christ and His evangel, he felt that even West London would some day be won for Jesus Christ. It was not so much the actual work accomplished by the West London Mission, great though that was, as the inspiration and impulse it gave to Christian people throughout the length and breadth of the land. Dean Farrar used to say concerning Wesley's marvellous work, 'From the impulse he gave originated almost every special form of enthusiasm since his day.' With equal truth

it can be said that from the spirit of social and ethical Christianity, which Hugh Price Hughes and his Mission infused into the churches, has arisen that new and broadened sense of obligation to the people's needs which is characterizing the work of the Churches to-day. Many of the institutions originated by the West London Mission have been imitated with success all over the country.

The story of the Mission's triumphs and manifold organizations are familiar to all, and space prevents their repetition here. At the Sunday evening services in the old St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, Mr. Hughes attracted the most 'cosmopolitan congregation in the world.' Princes and peers of the realm, down to the humblest citizen, found their way to these services. Except in the summer months, the doors of the hall were opened an hour and a quarter before the evening service began, and then the building was rapidly filled. The singing, always bright and hearty, was led by a first-class orchestra, which played a selection of suitable music half an hour

before the service was timed to begin. But more than all this, Sunday by Sunday light was caused to shine in men's hearts, sin's burdens were lifted, and men became new creations. The blessing of these conversions was not confined to London nor to Methodism; Methodists and members of other Churches visiting London from all parts of the United Kingdom and the States found their way to St. James's Hall, and returned to their homes with a new joy in their hearts and an eager desire to do Christ service.

'The West London Mission is the most important religious movement of our time,' Mr. Hughes used to say, and friends would smile and critics utter nasty things. But verily to him it was. Had he been possessed of a less lofty idea of the greatness of the Mission's work and possibilities, it would never have accomplished the good it did. So it was with everything Hugh Price Hughes had to do. Every moral issue was 'the greatest crisis of this generation'—an exaggeration in the eyes of some, true enough. But had *he* not

thought so, he could never have thrown his heart and soul so completely into the issue which was at the moment engaging his attention. Herein lay a secret of the man's earnestness and intensity. To belittle an enemy is to court failure, to minimize the importance of your work is to do it indifferently. These mistakes Mr. Hughes never committed. He felt that for every task all the strength and conviction one was capable of were needed.

With the West London Mission will ever be associated the work of the 'Sisters of the People.' In this Mrs. Price Hughes rendered her husband invaluable assistance. Women had done self-denying work in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, the Salvation Army had enlisted their service in a remarkably successful fashion ; could not some such enlistment be made from among the women of the Evangelical Churches ? From this idea was born the 'Sisterhood,' over which Mrs. Price Hughes has presided since its institution. Many are the stories that could be told of the work of these 'Sisters

of Mercy'—for such, in truth, they are—of light brought into dark homes, misery turned to happiness, and despair to hope.

None but a man of unique gifts could have founded and sustained the West London Mission; none but a leader of men, who recognized a higher Leader than himself; none but a captain whose faith knew no bounds, and who recognized that impossibilities with men were possibilities with God; none but a man who loved his fellow men as he loved Christ. Such a one was Hugh Price Hughes.

CHAPTER VI

PREACHER, PLATFORM SPEAKER, AND JOURNALIST

It is difficult to characterize such a man. He was a preacher. . . an orator . . . a debater . . . and a journalist. All the gifts which he thus displayed were combined in his work as an evangelist, and consecrated by an intense passion for the salvation of men.—*Obituary of HUGH PRICE HUGHES, in the 'Minutes of Conference.'*

HUGH PRICE HUGHES was a man of varied gifts, and to seek to determine his greatest talent is natural. Is it possible for a man to excel in the combination which heads this chapter? As far as this is possible Mr. Hughes attained it, but the possibility forms an interesting subject of discussion.

The question can never be satisfactorily settled until we decide what constitutes a great preacher. Concerning Mr. Hughes' preaching there was a variety of

opinion. Suffice it to say, had he been a greater preacher he would never have done so much for the Church of Christ. Mr. Hughes was essentially a man of action ; and such, with but few exceptions, the greatest preachers of our time have never been. His sympathies were too large, his horizon too wide, his brain too rapid to concentrate for a length of time on any one thing. ‘He is in everything that is going,’ wrote Mr. W. T. Stead, in 1891; ‘preacher, lecturer, agitator, politician, reformer, editor—he has a hand in all that interests his fellow men.’ The greatest preachers have often been men who could do nothing save preach ; to venture along any other road was to court failure, and they were conscious of it. Hugh Price Hughes could have excelled in anything he wished, and he excelled in those things in which he thought he could render Christ greatest service. This is strikingly illustrated in a remark of Mrs. Hughes.¹ On being asked what she considered the greatest triumph of her hus-

¹ *Life*, by his Daughter, page 221.

band's life, she replied, after several minutes' meditation, 'that he was willing not to be a great preacher in the usual acceptance of that term. He had the power to be one, the force, and the intellectual equipment; but he was willing not to be—to make himself of no account so that men should hear not him, but Christ.'

But Hugh Price Hughes *could* preach when occasion demanded, and many of his pulpit utterances are worthy to rank among the greatest of his day. On most occasions his sermons were marked by a striking lack of conventionality; he talked rather than preached, to his congregation. Their sincerity and sympathy were irresistible; topical, rather than expository; always fresh, vitalizing, and to the point, delivered with an extraordinary vigour and in a clear, commanding voice, they held his hearers from first to last. Those whose privilege it was constantly to hear Mr. Hughes at the old St. James's Hall testify that every sermon preached 'was alive with some new idea and impulse.'

Like all preachers he had his favourite theme ; with him it was the Atonement. By many ways did he approach it, but the end was always there. The last article written for the *Methodist Times* was on the death of Christ. ‘It is by proclaiming,’ he wrote, ‘the sinfulness of sin, and the love of God as revealed in the Cross, and the power of the Cross to deliver us from the power of sin, that we shall melt the hearts of men.’ Another favourite theme was the necessity of the believer’s close union with the living Christ. With Mr. Hughes, Christ was always living. ‘Real Christianity consists of a real living union between Jesus Christ and a converted man. Christianity is impossible unless Christ is now alive.’

None felt with more desperation—this is none too strong a word—the urgency of the salvation of his fellow men. While at Oxford he issued a circular to the members of his congregation prior to the holding of a special mission. ‘Numbers die in darkness every day,’ the circular said. ‘By your pity for unhappy souls,

by your love for the Church of God, by the rapid flight of your own day of labour and influence, by your obligations to Him who has redeemed you by His blood and whose heart yearns over the wanderer, we implore you to join heartily in this mission for bringing sinners to God.' The striking thing in this appeal is its note of *urgency*. Many years ago Mr. Gladstone wrote: 'My mind involuntarily reverts to the sad and solemn conviction that a fearfully great portion of the world around me is dying in sin. . . . How can I ever bear to think of my own seeking of the pleasures of life . . . or to give myself up to its business while my fellow creatures are day after day sinking into death?' In this same direction did the mind of Mr. Hughes involuntarily revert.

His sermons were undoubtedly greatest in their power of appeal. 'I stand in the place of Jesus Christ,' he would say, and no man ever pleaded with more passion for his Master. 'You are not teachers merely, you are advocates,' he said to the candidates for ordination when delivering

the charge in Great Queen Street Chapel. ‘ You represent Jesus Christ, who would speak through you. Your jury is the congregation. According to the nature of the jury you will present your case. Only remember you are there to win the verdict for Christ.’

As one listened to his preaching there was no doubting that the man was pleading for something he himself had felt and experienced. Dr. Fitchett, in his study of John Wesley as a spiritual force, attributes that great preacher’s power to convince men to his own conversion and assurance. To this might be attributed the success of Hugh Price Hughes. As he told the story of his own conversion, and the present power and willingness of Jesus Christ to save, none ever spoke from a deeper or more absolute conviction. It is not to be wondered at that all sorts and conditions of men heard him gladly, and sought and found Christ under his impassioned preaching.

Undoubtedly, Hugh Price Hughes was greatest on the public platform and in

debate. He had every gift necessary for such work—an extraordinary alertness of mind, an unusual facility of expression, a dexterous wit and keen sense of humour, an adroitness of repartee, a heart full of compassion, and the genius of interpreting the mind of his audience. Add to this a personality irresistible, and a force electric, and one has no difficulty in understanding how he came to be considered a prince among platform speakers. Hugh Price Hughes was at his best when there was something to combat, an evil to be denounced, a wrong to be redressed. On such occasions his enthusiasm was overwhelming and his passion intense. The most indifferent were moved almost against their will. Force, eloquence, wit, logic, pathos, and sympathy—all the gifts of a master-hand were his. As a barrister, he would have rapidly gained a place of distinction in the profession; as a politician, he would soon have been accounted among the foremost. But the love of Christ had filled his heart, and he knew none other service save that of his Master.

Every gift was consecrated to Him. He would sometimes rise late in a public meeting, when all the forces of enthusiasm seemed spent; but when he began to speak, fresh enthusiasm was quickly whipped into being, and for an hour or more he would hold the people spellbound, moving them now to laughter, then to pity, then to indignation, playing upon them as one might play upon a musical instrument. When all was at white-heat he would sit down, amid an outburst of applause. In the history of Methodism there has never been a more remarkable series of meetings than those held in the interest of the London Mission from 1890 to 1897; no building in the Kingdom could hold the crowds desirous to hear of this new movement so wonderfully owned of God; and it is impossible to exaggerate the influence, both direct and indirect, such gatherings must have produced on Methodism in London and in the provinces.

At Conference and in committee he displayed a remarkable power of recognizing

the true 'inwardness' of things. He was an ecclesiastical statesman, who saw a good deal further ahead than most of his contemporaries. In all Connexional movements he took the deepest interest, and rendered invaluable service to the Church he loved. One wonders how he found time to attend the numerous committees to which he was appointed. All the business was followed with keenest interest. Nothing was too trivial for his notice. He helped largely in the preparation of the 'New Form of Covenant Service,' the Form of Service for the Recognition of New Members; the *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*; and was keenly interested in the preparation of *The Methodist Hymn-Book*. As a member of the 'Committee of Privileges,' he was largely instrumental in bringing about many needed reforms. In the work of the 'Chapel Committee' he rendered much service; also in the formation of a National Assembly for Wesleyan Methodism in Wales, his native country. Mention will be made in a later chapter of his work

on the committee of the Free Church Council and the Wesleyan Methodist 'Twentieth Century Fund.'

His views constantly brought him into collision with others, and his attitude towards certain questions perplexed not a few. This was more especially so on the 'Missionary Controversy,' and in a very different sphere, the Boer War. Having made a stand, there he remained ; and no opposition, however fierce and determined, could daunt him. He knew no fear. 'It is nothing,' says Seneca, 'for a man to hold up his head in a calm ; but to maintain his post when all others have quitted their ground, and there to stand upright, when other men are beaten down—this is divine and praiseworthy.' He waged many wars and fought many battles, but he was always absolutely fair. There was nothing mean or base in his nature. He fought with clean weapons for what he thought to be the highest interests of justice and righteousness, and when the fight was over there was no lingering malice or ill-will. No bitter word ever fell from his

lips ; he would often shed tears because he thought his motives and actions were misunderstood. In many things he had the heart of a little child. ‘None could have done his work,’ wrote Dr. Robertson Nicoll at the time of his death, ‘and made so few enemies ; none could have fought his battles and left so little bitterness.’ All this was a sign of the man’s greatness and a testimony to the true nobility of his character.

Mention has already been made of his gift of repartee. When opposed, that gift proved a great source of strength. For the most part it was savoured with kindly humour, but it rarely failed to prove effective. Many thought some of the interruptions at his meetings must have been arranged beforehand, so dexterous and witty was the speaker’s manner of dealing with them. Early in his ministerial career, while speaking in the Dome at Brighton, he was constantly interrupted by a man sitting under the gallery who thought to confuse the speaker by crowing like a cock. This performance naturally

much amused the audience, and at first it seemed as if the interruption would completely upset the meeting. But the would-be disturber had not measured his man. Turning to the Mayor, who was occupying the chair, Mr. Hughes said : ‘ Mr. Mayor, I have been reading that remarkable book of Darwin’s, *The Origin of Species*, and he has proved to his own satisfaction that we are descended from the ape. But here is a startling evidence that Darwin is mistaken. We have not descended from the ape, but the cock. That gentleman under the gallery has proved it. Will he be good enough, Mr. Mayor, to repeat his ancestral noise for the benefit of this audience ? ’ It is needless to relate that this witty retort completely silenced the interrupter, and Mr. Hughes continued his speech in peace.

Hugh Price Hughes possessed a remarkable gift for raising money for church and mission purposes. On one occasion he was instrumental in clearing off a debt of £8,000 on the Wesleyan Missionary

Society. While stationed at Oxford he was invited to preach the anniversary sermon in London and speak at the breakfast meeting. At this meeting £4,000 was raised entirely owing to his initiative and tenacity. The remaining £4,000 was subscribed at the meeting held on the following Monday. On another occasion he raised £1,000 on behalf of the same fund. 'There is untold unconsecrated wealth in Methodism,' he would say. He had much to teach on the duty of right giving, which he placed on the highest level—love and gratitude towards Jesus Christ. It is computed that during his lifetime Mr. Hughes raised for his Church considerably over a quarter of a million pounds.

The name of Hugh Price Hughes will always be associated with the West London Mission and the *Methodist Times*. It was in 1885, while stationed at Brixton Hill, that he became editor of the *Methodist Times*. The need of a journal which would give utterance to the progressive spirit gradually making its influence felt

in Methodism was recognized, with the result that in 1884 a small limited company was formed, and the first number of the paper issued in the following year.

It attracted considerable attention, and rapidly gained a wide circulation, contributing in no small degree to the progress of the Forward Movement. Like everything else with which Hugh Price Hughes had to do, he stamped upon it his personality ; a very ‘Hughesful’ paper, people used to say, but had it been less ‘Hughesful’ it would never have accomplished the work it has done. The editor had a remarkable gift for interpreting the signs of the times. His eyes were not blinded to the ‘new world of thought and fact which had come into full view.’

On most occasions Mr. Hughes was responsible for the leading articles and “Notes and Comments.” These were eagerly devoured by friends of the Forward Movement. They dealt with all sorts of topics, other than those relative to Methodism. The paper was

a journal vividly in touch with the problems of the day. When a burning question was agitating the mind of the country, people would say, What will Hugh Price Hughes write in the *Methodist Times* next week? And there was always something clear, concise, and to the point. It was not that they always agreed with him, but the generous mind could not fail to admire the uncompromising honesty and remarkable enthusiasm of conviction and sincerity which characterized all Mr. Hughes wrote. The style was lucid and simple, yet strong and forceful. It was the work of a man who had gone about with his eyes open, of one who had not read books merely to forget them. The leaders were characterized by a remarkable aptness and facility of quotation, never dull or heavy. The language was sometimes strong—too strong for many. Exaggeration, people called it; but it was the man—to him everything was great.

Hugh Price Hughes had a lofty idea of the power of the press, and from the

first was a consistent reader of newspapers. When a lad he had eagerly devoured all the newspapers and periodicals that came into his father's house in Carmarthen. The press, he considered, was a valuable educational force. 'We Free Churchmen,' he once said, 'are only gradually awaking to the value of the press ; the Roman Catholic Church, with its usual astuteness, has set itself to train journalists, and so has the Salvation Army. We shall have to do the same, for newspapers can help the Church marvellously.' And the *Methodist Times* did 'help the Church marvellously'—thanks to Hugh Price Hughes. Undoubtedly he was a born writer, but some will recognize truth in a comment made by a leading literary journal¹ of the day at the time of his death : 'He had not perhaps the patience which produces a book of lasting quality, but his facility and powers of expression might have made him a great journalist.' There is another side to this. It was not altogether want of patience, but of time. He had

¹ *The Athenæum.*

higher and nobler ambitions than those which were merely literary. Beside his sermons and addresses, he only published one volume of any importance—*The Morning Lands of History*—an account of a tour in Greece, Palestine, and Egypt.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL REFORMER

The law of God has not two weights and measures. Christ came for all, He spoke to all, He died for all. We cannot wish the children of God to be equal before God, and unequal before men. . . . We protest against all oppression, wherever it is practised.

MAZZINI.

'IT is generally felt that we are rapidly approaching one of the most momentous turning-points in the social history of the world. Radical and far-reaching changes impend. Man was never so alive to the core of him, and in the whole of him, as he is to-day ; never so interested in the life of little children and oppressed women; in the mitigation of the sorrows of the poor, in the reform of the vicious and criminal, and in the salvation of the lost.' So writes Dr. Clifford in a recent volume dealing with the *Social Mission of the Church*. Its truth is undeniable ; never did the cry of social reform meet with so ready a response

as it does to-day. At last the Church is awaking to see that if it is to retain its hold upon the people and enlarge its borders, it must enter not merely theoretically but practically into every part of the people's life ; that it exists for the people's social, material, and political welfare, as well as to promote their spiritual and moral good.

There was one man who saw and realized all this while many of his co-religionists were either sleeping or indifferent. That man was Hugh Price Hughes ; and in any account of the present desire of the Churches to face and solve the social problem, it behoves us to do honour to one whose life and teaching have inspired thousands with an enthusiasm for social service. No voice was raised more unceasingly in pulpit or on platform against every form of tyranny and oppression ; the *Methodist Times* was a journal of religious and *social* movement, and the editor's pen was ever active in the *social* causes of humanity ; social evils were unsparingly denounced in its columns, and many a

notable victory gained for righteousness, justice, and social purity. Brought face to face, as Mr. Hughes was in West London, with the social problem in its acutest form, he had every opportunity for studying it at first hand, and courageously and hopefully did he set himself to solve it. The recent formation of a Union for Social Service in the Wesleyan Methodist Church is significant. It has come none too soon. Had Hugh Price Hughes been living he would have been among its warmest supporters. Let it be acknowledged with gratitude that for the formation of this union he largely prepared the way ; to a great extent his was a voice crying in the wilderness, but one to which men have now hearkened.

In a preface to a volume of sermons entitled *Social Christianity*, which Mr. Hughes published in 1889, he expressed his conviction that the manhood of Europe had been to a fearful extent alienated from Christianity because Christianity had been too speculative, too sentimental, too individualistic. In the re-

action from mediaeval ecclesiasticism the Church had gone too far, and had practically neglected the fact that Christ came to save the nation as well as the individual, and that an essential feature of Christ's mission was to reconstruct human society on the basis of justice and love. The failure of social Christianity was not the fault of Christianity or of Christ, but the fault of Christians who had been selfishly individualistic.

It was more especially at the Sunday afternoon conferences in St. James's Hall that Mr. Hughes spoke on social and public questions, and dealt with the ethical side of Christianity. Many of these conferences created widespread interest, and their sentiments were echoed all over the country. The vigorous practical Christianity preached appealed to many biased against the Churches, and to some came with all the force of a revelation. At the time of Mr. Hughes' death there appeared in the London *Daily News* a letter from Mr. George Jacob Holyoake. After begging space for a word of tribute from

one who was 'not at all of his faith,' he went on to say : 'Mr. Hughes' great distinction in my eyes was the interest he took in expanding the ethical side of Christianity. . . . The dogmatic side of Christianity had a long, long day ; the ethical side has hardly dawned, and Mr. Price Hughes was one of its rays.'

These Sunday afternoon Conferences were an attempt to apply Christianity to every aspect of life. Christianity, insisted Mr. Hughes, was not something that had to do with a mere fragment of one's existence. It had to do with men in their business, and as citizens, quite as much as in their private life. There were endless ways in which men could preach the gospel, in addition to holding prayer-meetings and delivering what might be called sermons. Christianity was for this world as well as the world to come. As Christians men must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and that kingdom had to be sought in London fogs, not in Paradise.

On these occasions Mr. Hughes dealt

with a remarkable variety of subjects. Temperance reform, gambling, social purity, the evils of war, fair hours and conditions of labour for the working classes, the promotion of public health, the administration of justice, woman's wrongs, the well-being of little children, kindness to animals, and any subject of importance engaging the public mind at the moment. Some of these topics are much discussed in the pulpit of to-day ; but it was not so in those days, and in the future 'the historian who seeks to trace the growth of social ethics must not forget these Conferences in St. James's Hall.' There was no smooth speaking or mincing of matters in these addresses. In one of the earliest Mr. Hughes declared : 'There are only two alternatives before us to-day—Christianity or revolution. What can we do ? A thousand things. If you will come here on Sunday afternoons I will tell you a few of these things in plain English.' And he did ; 'not in academic, obscure, or hushed phrase,' but in quite forcible, unmistakable English,

which none could fail to understand.

It is impossible within the compass of this little book to give a detailed analysis of all Mr. Hughes' teaching on social questions. He insisted first, that it was essential for all who would enlist in social service to place themselves at the *right point of view*; men must look at these questions through the compassionate eyes of Jesus Christ. To know the suffering of the poor as Christ knew it was to have pity; and when once men's hearts were moved, they would not be slow in discovering some method, great or small, of relieving misery and sin. There was no such thing as a 'necessary evil'; the main business of the Christian pulpit was to bring home to the Christian congregation that it was the bounden duty of every Christian man and woman to do their utmost to abate and destroy *every kind of evil*. The Church must grapple in a bold, direct, decisive way with these questions. Nothing was too difficult if men were only possessed of faith—that is, courage, enthusiasm, and persistence.

Jesus Christ was the greatest of social reformers. He came into the world to save human society as well as individuals. When Christ came, man, *as man*, had no rights whatever ; and if that was the case with man, it was much more the case with woman. Some dared to say Buddha was more illustrious than Christ. What had Buddha done for woman in comparison with what Christ had done ? What had Buddha done for children ? When Jesus Christ, the greatest of all social reformers, came into this world, there was no protection for the weak, no comfort for the sorrowful, no effective restraint for the wicked. Christ came, and the great revolution began at once. He said that every man, *as a man*, was immeasurably greater than wealth or rank could ever make him ; as the Son of Man He declared that every man was His brother, and every woman His sister. Once realize the sacredness of every human being, however poor, however ignorant, however degraded, and tyranny becomes impossible, lust becomes im-

possible, war becomes impossible. This was the new idea Christ introduced into human society, and the idea by which it would be ultimately revolutionized.

Mr. Hughes held that the real character of every nation was determined by its laws. It was a delusion to think men could not be made moral by Act of Parliament ; an Act of Parliament was something more than mere force, it was educational ; it strengthened the conscience, and even the most degraded usually realized that the illegal was the wrong. There were crying injustices in the law of England. One was that crimes against the *person* were regarded as almost trivial in comparison with crimes against *property*. ‘There is the greatest possible care for property, to which we do not object, for God says, “Thou shalt not steal.” But there is the most terrible neglect of that which is of immeasurably greater importance—the sacred personal rights of every man, woman, and child, whether rich or poor.’

Mr. Hughes held strong views on ‘Pauperism.’ Defining a pauper as ‘a

man so poor that he lacks the absolute necessities of life,' he declared that there was not a single passage in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, that justified anybody in asserting that pauperism was a necessity. God had made ample provision in the beneficence of Nature for all the real needs of every human being on earth. Pauperism, as distinguished from poverty, was no more a necessary evil than slavery, or drunkenness, or lust, or war, or any other of the social scourges which are the avoidable results of human selfishness. He advocated that the work must be undertaken in some way by the State; private benevolence and voluntary charitable organizations had failed. He had much to say concerning the duty of Christians as citizens, and these conferences did not a little in educating Christian people to a sense of their civic responsibility. With fearless zeal he threw in his lot with the Progressives in the early days of the London County Council, and supported their programme on platform and in press. There

were more ways than one of making London a city of God. He took a leading part in a campaign against the low character of entertainments given at the London music halls, organizing a mass meeting of protestation, over which the Bishop of London presided. Mention has already been made of his attitude toward Temperance reform. He at any rate in all these questions tried to get at the *right point of view*, and to look at them ‘through the eyes of Jesus Christ.’

One of these Sunday afternoon conferences in particular stands out as memorable. It was that from which there went out the famous dictum, ‘Mr. Parnell must go.’ This was after the divorce suit in which Mr. Parnell was co-respondent. Mr. Hughes felt at all possible cost public life must be kept pure; it was not a question of Ireland or Home Rule, but of public morality and national righteousness. Many Irishmen were present in support of their leader, and the speaker was constantly interrupted; but to hear Mr. Hughes at his best was to hear him under such

conditions. The speech and gathering created a great sensation. In connexion with them the *Times* newspaper invented the now famous phrase, the 'Nonconformist Conscience,' in a leading article attacking Mr. Hughes.

It was during Mr. Hughes' first ministerial term at Dover that he became acquainted with Mrs. Josephine Butler. That godly lady came to Dover to address a public meeting in favour of the repeal of the C.D. Acts. Mr. Hughes was present on the platform, and at the close proposed a vote of thanks to the speaker. Before he concluded his speech, he was so overcome with pity and indignation, that he burst into tears and rushed from the platform. Those tears meant much. They were something more than a mere passing emotion ; they were illustrative of something which characterized all his life and work. In a very literal sense did he enter into the fellowship of his Master's suffering, whose greatest agony was His travail of soul because of sin. In Mr. W. T. Stead's campaign of 1885 Mr.

Hughes played a prominent part. The articles from Mr. Stead's pen, entitled 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,' which first appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, attracted widespread attention, and in the fight which followed none fought more strenuously on the side of Mr. Stead than did Hugh Price Hughes.

Hugh Price Hughes was often charged with being a party politician ; that charge was always unjust. In the generally-accepted sense of that much abused term, he was nothing of the kind. So non-partisan was he that he incurred the wrath of both parties, and was more than once denounced by both Liberals and Conservatives. He had politics, but they were those of the kingdom of God. 'Every act of social life has its political side,' he said ; 'in that true and proper sense it is impossible for any human being, except an anchorite, to escape from politics.'

As far as possible, he endeavoured to translate all his Christian social ideas into practice in the West London Mission. He interested his workers in everything that

promoted 'the bodily health, the mental growth, and the social enjoyment of the people.' He was delighted when one of his colleagues headed the poll of the St. Pancras Borough Council and served as Chairman of the Public Health Committee for that thickly-populated district. This, he thought, was practical Christianity. Likewise, when some of the Sisters were elected on the Board of Guardians. With Mrs. Price Hughes, the 'Sisters of the People,' and devoted colleagues both clerical and lay, he built up an extraordinary network of social agencies ; and the poor, the miserable, and the outcast of West London soon came to learn that he and the workers at the Mission were their truest friends. The Mission's social work was inspired by a sympathy and pity that drew their source from 'something warmer than theology.' Hugh Price Hughes and his workers had come into personal contact with Jesus Christ, and His burden had become their burden.

CHAPTER VIII

PRESIDENT

Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

MANY honoured offices came to Hugh Price Hughes. In 1896 he was elected President of the National Free Church Council, and in 1898 received the highest honour Methodism can give to her sons—the Chair of the Conference.

In the formation and work of the Free Church Council he took the deepest interest, and did more than any other man to make its ideal a possibility. Intensely loyal to his own Church, his sympathies were not confined within its borders. ‘Thank God,’ said one, ‘he was the property of the nation, and not of a sect.’ From the first the Free Church

movement captivated his imagination, and with characteristic optimism he prophesied for it immense possibilities of usefulness.

What he desired to see was the practical re-union of the Churches outside the Established Church. He strenuously opposed the inclusion of Unitarians as members of the Council, maintaining that the basis of union could only rest on belief in the Divinity, Atonement, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the first he insisted upon the directly *evangelical* character of the movement; its aims, before everything else, were spiritual and religious, not 'sectarian or defensive.' It was not a political movement, in the sense in which that greatly-abused word was usually employed. There was only one rock on which the movement might be wrecked, and that was the possibility of misapprehension or prejudice in this direction. Time has proved the wisdom and foresight of these last words, and not a few view with apprehension the near entry of the Free Church Council into the political arena.

The idea of the movement was first publicly brought to the front by an article from the pen of Dr. Guinness Rogers, which appeared in the *Methodist Times* of February 20, 1890. In that article Dr. Rogers expressed the conviction that the time had come when the unity which really existed among the different Evangelical and Nonconformist Churches should be made more visible. Further, he advocated a yearly congress of the Free Churches on the same lines as the Church Congress. By this means he thought there would be developed a united Nonconformist 'Church Idea.' The next issue of the *Methodist Times* contained contributions from a number of Nonconformist leaders, who wrote in warm support of the suggestion. The movement was greatly aided by the 'Re-union Conferences' promoted by Dr. Henry S. Lunn, and held at Grindelwald in 1892 and 1893. These conferences were attended not only by Nonconformists but also by many conspicuous dignitaries of the Anglican Church. It was here that

Mr. Hughes first met Dr. Berry, who afterwards played such a conspicuous part in the new movement. One outcome of these conferences was the revelation of the impossibility of anything like organic union with the Anglican Church. But there was no reason why the Evangelical Free Churches should not become federated, for after all their differences were very slight, and not of an essential character.

The first gathering of the Free Church Congress was held in Manchester in 1892, and the second in Leeds in 1894. At Leeds the basis of representation was established on a motion of Mr. Hughes. This was to the effect that the representation should not be denominational but territorial ; there were to be no sectarian differences, but all representatives should attend as Evangelical Free Churchmen. In 1895 the Council met at Birmingham, under the presidency of Dr. Berry, and Hugh Price Hughes was nominated President for the following year. He was the first Methodist President, and the first

President actually elected by the Council itself. The Council met in Nottingham, and Mr. Hughes as President delivered a brilliant and masterly address, entitled 'Democracy and the Twentieth Century.'

Not the least service rendered by Mr. Hughes to the Free Church Movement was his share in preparing the Free Church Catechism. The need of some definite statement which should express the doctrinal conviction of the Federated Churches was felt by all. The object was to give expression to the fundamental and essential truths common to all the great Evangelical Churches. The project was first put forward during Mr. Hughes' presidential year, and consequently he was *ex-officio* chairman of the committee responsible for the work; but so thoroughly did he enter into the task that he was afterwards made permanent chairman. The meetings of the committee extended over two years, and were held in Mr. Hughes' house in Taviton Street. The finished Catechism was warmly received by the Free Churches,

and has since been widely circulated not only throughout Great Britain, but in British Colonies and the United States of America.

Mr. Hughes' unique platform gifts proved of inestimable benefit in advocating the claims of the Council. In its early days he travelled the whole country in its interest, rousing crowded audiences to a white heat of enthusiasm wherever he went. On the various committees he rendered invaluable service. In truth did Dr. Guinness Rogers say at the Council's annual gathering the year after Mr. Hughes' death, 'If it had not been for Hugh Price Hughes we should not have been here at all.' Mr. Hughes looked on his labour in connexion with the Free Church Council as among the most important public work of his life. It was indeed something to play so large a part in creating and sustaining a movement which has grown to such considerable dimensions, and attained, as even its critics cannot deny, such a position of influence.

As already stated, in 1898 Hugh Price Hughes was elected to the Chair of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. There have been few more popular elections. When the voting was announced revealing that the Superintendent of the West London Mission, and leader of Methodism's Forward Movement, had received no fewer than 369 votes out of 505, the Conference witnessed what the Press termed a 'most remarkable scene.' The whole assembly showed its expression of delight and joy by shouts and clapping of hands—a most unprecedented procedure. With not less enthusiasm was the election received by Methodists all over the world. The story is told of a Yorkshire farmer, ninety years of age, bed-ridden for ten years, and living fourteen miles from a railway station, so that he might be supposed to be out of the world, who said that if he lived to the day on which Hugh Price Hughes was elected President of the Conference, he would die happy—and he did. Many thought the honour should have been given earlier, and had grown im-

patient at the tardy recognition. But official Methodism does nothing in a hurry, which, perhaps, is one of the secrets of her stability. The ‘common people’ had crowned their hero long before the Methodist Conference.

Hugh Price Hughes’ special work, according to his own words, was that of a ‘Pioneer and Reformer.’ ‘Now,’ he said in his inaugural address to the Conference, ‘I am not so ignorant of human nature, not even in the regenerate, as not to know the probable fate of the pioneer and reformer in a very compact organization.’ He then went on to say: ‘I confess that nothing would have pleased and encouraged me so much during the last strenuous twenty years as some occasional recognition by this Conference. . . Your Teutonic ancestors sometimes took a plain soldier from the ranks, lifted him on their shields, and proclaimed him lord and emperor of all. You have revived that ancient democratic method to-day. Until this morning I was nothing in this Conference except the circuit minister.’

He then spoke with deep feeling of the recent death of his father. There was one personal ground on which he would have greatly rejoiced to be President. ‘It would have been a great gratification to my father,’ he said, ‘if he had been on earth to-day. But he died last autumn, and when, having sung his favourite hymn, “Rock of Ages,” we laid his mortal remains in the grave, I felt that the only personal ground on which I would care for this great distinction was buried with him.’ All this was very admirably and beautifully put, and could not fail to move and impress the Conference. The whole address was marked by that irresistible simplicity and deep sincerity which characterized all Mr. Hughes’ utterances.

The President felt that the urgent need of Methodism was not a million guineas,¹ though he believed they would get them. It was not a million new converts ; they were not ready for them. It was that the ministers and lay officers should give

¹A reference to ‘The Twentieth Century Fund.’

themselves ‘afresh and more absolutely than ever to the service of God.’ To this end he proposed that during his year of office, instead of travelling the country preaching ‘special sermons’ and opening new chapels, he should hold a series of district Conventions, to which ministers, local preachers, class-leaders, Sunday-school teachers, stewards, and trustees should be invited. For this the President asked the permission of the Conference, which, needless to say, was most heartily and unanimously given. The Conventions everywhere were characterized by deep spiritual power, and many were led to dedicate themselves afresh to God. The membership ‘returns’ at the next Conference showed an increase of 5,000, while 33,000 were reported as being ‘on trial.’

Another departure instituted by Mr. Hughes was greater insistence on the devotional exercises of the Conference. Before the assembly settled each morning to business, he asked some well-known minister or layman to give a brief devotional address. These were seasons of

great blessing, and without doubt helped much in the business which followed.

It was at the Hull Conference that the famous 'Twentieth Century Fund' was inaugurated. In this remarkable and successful scheme, which aimed at raising a million guineas from a million Methodists, for the purpose of aggressive work at home and abroad, Hugh Price Hughes played no small part ; first, by the skilful way in which he conducted the debates from the Conference Chair, then later by his untiring and powerful advocacy and invaluable work on the committee.

Hugh Price Hughes was a veritable 'master of assemblies.' To see him presiding over some great representative gathering was to see him at his best ; the more difficult it was to control the better. He was masterful sometimes, but only when necessary. Impatient, but then his brain worked quicker than most. He would brook no infringement of order or debate, and any brother guilty of these offences was sternly but not unkindly called to order. He was not without the

saving grace of humour, and never failed to keep his gathering in good temper. He had a remarkable facility for marshalling facts, and recognizing the trend of debate. He might not have made an ideal 'Speaker' for the House of Commons, but he made an ideal President for the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, which only goes to illustrate the difference between the two.

Mr. Hughes' election to the Presidency secured for him the Chairmanship of the Second London District Synod. In all the work of the District he took the deepest practical interest, and under his charge this Synod became one of the most aggressive in Methodism. Not a few schemes owe their successful launching to his boundless faith and untiring efforts.

CHAPTER IX

THE END

I have fought my way through,
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do.

CHARLES WESLEY.

IN a very literal sense did Hugh Price Hughes fight his way through. A warrior, never seeming to tire in the fight, every conquest was for him a call to further victory. He knew none other Captain save Christ, and to do His bidding was the passion of his life. Often it cost him much, but nothing could stay Christ's constraining love. Let a man once become possessed of a passion for Christ, and there are no bounds to his life.

It is hard, but wrong, to say his work was unfinished. Who can tell? True, to men it seemed incomprehensible. When the old lay down their weapons, and make

the last journey, we can understand—a little. But there seemed so much more for Hugh Price Hughes to accomplish. It is the same all through history's pages. God raises up men for some special work, and all they can do is to begin it ; others must continue and help it on to completion. ‘It is finished,’ said the Redeemer on Calvary’s cross—and it was. The agony and suffering, the Father’s will, the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice—these were finished. Yet it was but the beginning, and men in every age since then have been working towards its completion.

For Hugh Price Hughes the end came rapidly ; it was without doubt just as he would have wished. For some time his friends had had grave anxieties concerning his health, but few realized that the end was so near. Strenuous, forceful, and unresting—the very embodiment of all that is in that boundless term, life—it was hard to associate death with such a one as he. As far back as 1893 there had been a serious breakdown, and he was compelled under medical advice to take a six

months' rest. Then again, in 1899, and, most serious of all, early in 1901. In March of that year he went to Manchester to take part in the Free Church Simultaneous Mission, and was taken suddenly ill on the Monday morning after the work of Sunday. Ordered complete rest, he went to Carmarthen, and afterwards to Switzerland. In the early summer he was back again at work, but only for a brief time, and the idea of attending Conference had to be abandoned. The winter and early spring were spent at Bournemouth; then later he again went to Switzerland, and, returning to England, seemed greatly strengthened. He was present at the Manchester Conference, and entered into the debates with his usual vigour and brilliancy. He made a spirited defence of Dr. Beet, who had been summoned before a special committee on a question of doctrine; and a vigorous attack on the Education Bill. But the inevitable reaction followed; and, compelled once again to seek rest, he went to Grindelwald.

Returning to London, he took up his work on the Mission, but was still far from well. His friends sorrowfully noticed a certain weariness and languor, and his usual eagerness and vivacity were wanting. Many things that once interested him seemed to have lost their spell. Even London failed in its wonted fascination. He was paying the penalty of his strenuous life. He had worn himself out by incessant toil.

At this time he was residing during the greater part of the week at Haslemere, in a house generously provided by some of his friends. Always grateful for any kindness, this gift overwhelmed him. It was his custom to go down to Haslemere on the Monday, and return to Taviton Street on the Friday.

On the morning of Friday, November 14, 1902, he came to town as usual, and conducted at Katherine House an admission service of two probationers entering the 'Sisterhood.' St. James's Hall was as usual crowded on the Sunday evening, and the service was characterized by a remark-

able spiritual power. Many whose privilege it was to listen to his last sermon—for so it proved to be—testify that never since his first illness had he preached with such power. ‘He strode up and down the platform quite in his old way, and there was not the slightest sign of restraint in his movements.’ The text was taken from Matt. xi. 27 : ‘No one knoweth the Son save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.’ There have been many memorable services in St. James’s Hall, but few more memorable than this. How little did the congregation think that the voice they loved so well was so soon to go down into silence !

On Monday morning he engaged in his usual work, and left Taviton Street early in the afternoon to attend the Christian Conference at Sion College. In the evening he was engaged to preach at Victoria Wesleyan church. Leaving Sion College, he walked towards Ludgate Circus. Over-taking one of the Sisters of the Mission,

they went on together, Mr. Hughes talking the while about the address he had just listened to. Twice he let his umbrella fall, and the second time was unable to pick it up. Noticing something unusual the Sister said, ‘Mr. Hughes, are you unwell?’ It was the beginning of the end. Before home was reached he had lost consciousness, never again to regain it.

‘Hugh Price Hughes is dead!’ Far and wide the sad news rapidly spread. Men could scarcely believe their own eyes, as they read it on the newspaper placards next morning. Others to whom it was told looked incredulous. ‘Hugh Price Hughes dead!’ But it was true. The warrior had fought his last battle. The racer had finished his course.

There have been few more remarkable scenes than those witnessed in Wesley’s historic sanctuary, and the cemetery at Highgate, on Friday, November 21, 1902. The vast congregation assembled in the chapel was not only representative of Methodism and the Free Churches, but many of the Established Church were

there to show their esteem and admiration for one who had lived so nobly and so well. Scotland, Ireland, and of course Wales, were represented. ‘Never within our memory, except at the celebration of Wesley’s death,’ said the *Methodist Recorder* at that time, ‘has there been so catholic an assembly on Methodist ground. It was literally the realization for the moment of Charles Wesley’s words :

Love, like death, hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void.’

The President’s¹ address was singularly appropriate, simple, and intense; it moved all hearts. Their mourning, he said, was as widespread as it was sincere. Not only Methodism, but other churches of the United Kingdom, the Colonies, and the United States sorrowfully felt that a great moral force had passed away from their midst. He went on to speak of how Hugh Price Hughes had re-kindled the fires of the old evangelism. The *old* evangelism—it was not a new thing.

¹The Rev. J. Shaw Banks, D.D.

How he had rendered priceless service in bringing the Church more into touch and line with the great movements of the life of the nation. In Mr. Hughes' heart there was a passionate conviction that the path of national righteousness was the path of national safety and honour. By the blessing of God he was able to inspire his convictions and his ideas into thousands and thousands of hearts, both within and without his own communion. 'He will live,' said the President, 'and his influence will be felt for long, long years to come.'

'He will live.' This was the only comforting thought of that grey November day. Men's hearts were heavy, and their eyes tearful. Hugh Price Hughes was dead. But he would live. This was their consolation.

It belongs to us to continue the work Hugh Price Hughes began. The battle is still raging—against darkness, sin, unrighteousness, and injustice. God still calls men to service. Shall they not fight more valiantly, because of the way in which

this brave champion fought ? This is the lesson of his life : ‘ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor’s crown of gold.

On the cross which marks his burial place at Highgate are engraved the words :

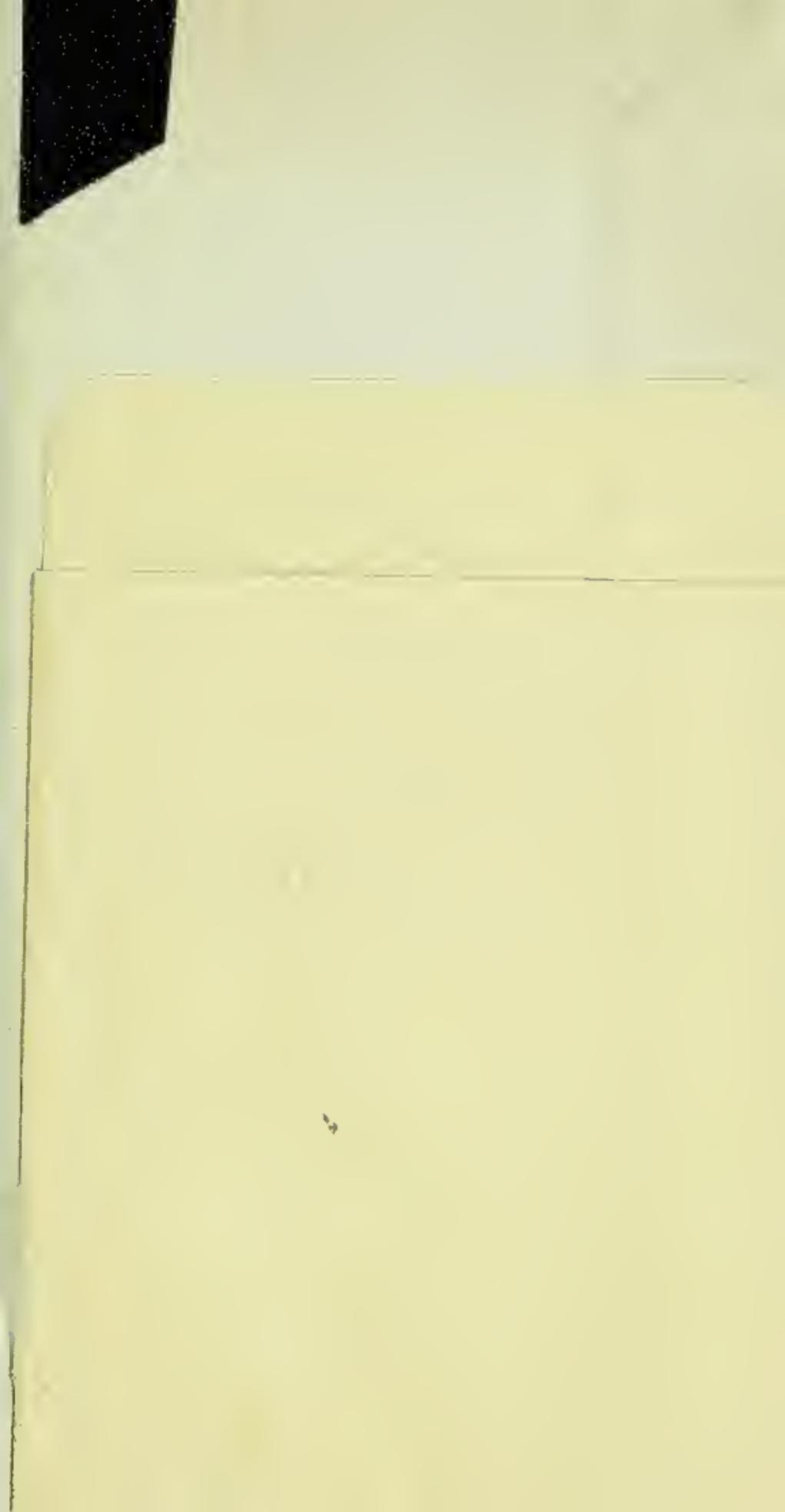
‘ Thou, O Christ, art all I want.’

Herein was the secret of his power—had found his sole sufficiency in Jesus Christ.

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